

DOCTRINAL AND CONTROVERSIAL.

"THE AGITATION OF THOUGHT IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM."

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The Soul is Immortal.

BY E. MASON.

The latest development in the discussion of this subject is, that the souls of the good will be immortal, and the souls of the wicked will be annihilated. So this is what the brethren were driving at, and I do not wonder that they were a little timid in plainly saying so.

The question is, what part of man is the soul? I think that it is beyond the satisfactory definition of mortal man. It is not the body, however. Although I admit that in various passages of Scripture, and sometimes in our common conversation, it is made synonymous with body. But religiously, when we use the term, it is invariably used to mean the immortal part of man. Soul and spirit are often used in the same sense. Undoubtedly it was that part of Dives, to which Abraham addressed himself, when he said, Son, remember.

By the way, why do our brethren on the other side of the question, give the parable of the rich man and Lazarus such a wide berth? We call this a parable, but we have no authority for it but the translators who placed the divisions at the head of each chapter. The Lord says, there *was* a certain rich man, etc. Who will take issue with the Lord and say there was not? As far as my definition of soul is concerned, whenever I use the term, I mean that part of man that is immortal. When I mean body, I say body. And I believe that is about the way in which it is generally used. As Bro. Ridenour has enlightened the brethren on the scriptural proof of this, I will not repeat now.

Bro. Peck seems to have never seen the Savior's assertion concerning everlasting punishment, and desires me to give chapter and verse. Why, certainly, my dear brother, I am always glad to enlighten the brethren. I will not merely give you chapter and verse, but the words also.

And these, (the wicked) shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal. Matt. 25:46.

And what favorable construction to annihilation can the brethren find in the words of Christ as recorded in Mark 9:43? "It is better for thee to enter life maimed than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched, where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched."

In Rev. 14:11, this torment is everlasting: "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night who worship the beast and the image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name."

Then, again, in Daniel 12:2, And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Besides, what are we to understand by the expressions so frequently used in Scripture: Everlasting destruction, everlasting fire, everlasting chains, everlasting death, everlasting punishment? Is the word everlasting there merely to mislead and deceive us? I have no doubt that some of us will even wrest these scriptures from their original and plainest sense to suit our ideas. This is the greatest trouble in religion: a few isolated texts are taken, and upon them an idea is formed, and then all other scripture seeming to conflict with this idea, is warped and twisted to suit. Thus sects are born. Let us, as our motto implies, take the Scriptures as a grand whole.

Again, the early church fathers who lived nearest the time of the Apostles, undoubtedly gathered from their teaching that the punishment of the wicked will be of endless duration. Chrysostom and Augustine both repudiated the doctrine of non-eternity of punishment, first breached by Origen in the third century. Hear what Irenæus says:

But as many as in their deliberate will, fall away from God, upon them he brings that separation

from him, which is chosen by themselves. Now, separation from God is death, and separation from light is darkness, and separation from God involves the loss of all the good things that flow from him. Then they, who, through the falling away have forfeited the things aforesaid, inasmuch as they are deprived of all good things, abide in punishment of every kind. Not as if God were the prime and original agent in punishing them, but rather as if their punishment followed in due course on account of their having been deprived of all good things. Now the good things which are from God, are eternal and without end; and therefore, the privation of them also is eternal and without end; just as the light being continuous, they who have blinded themselves, or have been blinded by others, are continuously deprived of the enjoyment of the light, not because the light brings them the punishment in being blinded, but because the blinding itself superinduces their calamity. And on this account the Lord said: He that believeth on me is not condemned; that is, is not separated from God; for by faith he is united to God. But he that believeth not, saith he, is condemned already because he hath not believed on the name of the only-begotten Son of God; that is, hath by his own voluntary sentence separated himself from God. And this is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, etc. *Irenæus contra Hæreses, Lib. V. Cap. 28.*

And again, "But as in this temporal light, those who fly from it, make themselves over to darkness so that they themselves become the cause to themselves why they are deprived of light and inhabit darkness, and the light is not the cause to them of this kind of experience, as we before said, so those who fly from the eternal light of God, which containeth in itself all good things, are themselves the cause to themselves of their inhabiting eternal darkness, destitute of all good things. *Ibid, Lib. IV Cap. 39.*

Irenæus was a very early father, born about 130. In his early youth he had heard Polycarp, who was a disciple of St. John's.

Even Origen confessed that the non-eternity of punishment was a dangerous doctrine to advocate.

In proof of this opinion by the early fathers, I will refer you to the Apostolic and the Athanasian Creeds. In the former, we have the formula I believe * * * in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. The life everlasting being subjoined to the resurrection of the body, must be indefinitely co-extended, and so belong to all bodies that are raised. This is more manifest in the Athanasian Creed, which explains it thus: And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire.

I am not a little surprised at the interpretation given by the brethren, of Matt. 10:28. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. See how carefully the words kill and destroy are selected. Does destroy necessarily mean annihilation?

I have no doubt that many would be too glad if this doctrine of annihilation were true. Like Altamont, the infidel, they cry out: Oh thou blasphemed, but most indulgent Lord God, Hell itself is a refuge if it hide me from thy frown. What a dismal picture we have of this, in Rev. 6:16, when certain cried to the mountains and the rocks, Fall on us and hide us from Him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. Annihilation now comes to the rescue and proposes to do this very thing.

Brethren, beware; there is a kind of infidelity that insinuates itself in the heart of man, clothed in the garb of truth. It is very deceptive. It deceived our first parents, and unless our faith is founded on the eternal Word of God, it will also deceive us. I think that we can get a more profitable employment than to ransack the Scripture to uphold some favorite opinion, and contradict the direct teachings of Christ. Your opinion, Bro. Peck is not "proven so easily and clearly" after all. I do not expect to change your ideas, but be careful lest your too positive assertions concern-

ing a very doubtful doctrine may do more harm than good. As far as I am individually concerned, I care not what will become of the wicked; my aim is eternal life. Let us leave the wicked in the hands of a just God. We can discuss a more profitable subject that will enliven our zeal and increase our faith, and thus help one another on to glory.

Parvum in Multo.

BY NOSAM.

There it is again, he is always finding fault. Nothing goes right. It is grumble and finding fault, fault-finding and grumble all the time. He is forever at it. Not a good word for anything.

No one does right. The congregation did not behave themselves—he wants them to sit as quiet as marble statues. They did not sing to please him. He scolded them, and kept at it until they do not come anymore. And now he scolds those that are present for those that do not come. There is no one so faultless as himself, and he has no patience with anyone. He may think that is all right.

But you know there is no music so sweet to a bird as its own voice, though the bird be an owl; but other people think differently. Every one dodges this continual and useless firing, and let the shot whiz overhead. Hold back your ammunition, brother, and shoot only when it is necessary. Then you may expect to do some good.

Of course they noticed it, how could they help it?

As he walked up that aisle to take his seat he brought with him the odor of tobacco smoke. After the service, when he came down to shake hands with the congregation, although he may try to hide it with cologne or peppermint or cloves, they still smell the abominable stench. He may have tried to conceal it, when he threw his cud away before he entered the church, but the young people standing around the church door saw it. Among the membership may be some who may be hesitating as to the propriety of Christians using tobacco. The teaching of the minister has decided it. "Why not?" says one, "may I not indulge? our minister uses it."

And probably some weak one may say, "if our minister enjoys the use of tobacco, and there must be something enjoyable in it; I will try it." Thus the minister encourages his members to commence a fault that will burn a big hole in his pocket-book, make him the headquarters of a filthy odor, wither his nerves, derange his digestive system, reduce him from a freeman to a slave, and so becloud and bespatter his fair Christian name, that it can hardly be discerned amidst the clouds of tobacco smoke, or seen underneath the mass of expectorated juice.

There is nothing so hard to heal as a wounded reputation—the scar will always be there—and at the same time there is nothing so sensitive. Scarcely anything cuts so deep as an unkind word. Of all the weapons, pride, envy and hatred have at their disposal, none is so bad as a lawless tongue. When is the man or woman, worthy of the name, who would not sooner suffer anything than be charged with some crime which he or she could not possibly have committed? How many hopes the slanderous tongue has blighted! How many hearts it has broken! How many graves it has dug! We may put forth our utmost endeavors to undo the evil, but we can never gather up again the evil words we have uttered. Many families have been broken up, many churches have been disbanded, many communities have been laid under reproach, by a word maliciously or heedlessly spoken. I have heard of an institution buried too deep ever to reach the light again, and two evil tongues dug the grave.

Content is the philosopher's stone that turns all it touches into gold.

All changes, to be permanent and improving, must be gradual. Leaps and jumps are not successfully taken either in mental advancement or in moral character.

Every human being has a work to carry on within, duties to perform abroad, influences to exert, which are peculiarly his and which no conscience but his own can teach.

In private conversation between intimate friends the wisest men very often talk like the weakest; for, indeed, the talking with a friend is nothing else but thinking aloud.